

REMISSION

The neurologist begins his visit
to my father's hospital room with a test.
He gives him three words to remember,
cow, dog, Broadway,
and before he leaves he asks for them back.

My father remembers the cow and the dog
but the last one gives him trouble,
powerlines knocked down by the brainstorm
of his stroke.

"It's a big street in New York," prompts
the doctor and father snaps "Broadway!"
jubilant and still proud of his answer
as he tells me the story from his bed.

Not bad for a man who got a zero last week
on the Where are you? What year is it? quiz.

DEATH

In the good old days news of it travelled by foot.
An aproned woman would wave to her husband
as he receded down the lane, hauling
the stone of the message.

Or someone would bring it out by horse
the young at a gallop, the old trotting along.
Inside, a girl would part a curtain wondering
what anyone would be doing here at this hour
as she watched him dismount, hitch the beast to a post
then lift the brass knocker, wet with night dew.

But today we have the telephone. You are
probably within earshot of one right now,
its hammer almost touching the little bell,
ready to summon you, ready to fall from your hand.